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REMARKS

Prior to entry of this amendment, claims 1-26 were pending in the application. Upon entry of this amendment, new independent claim 28 and dependent claims 2-5, 7-22 and 24-26 remain pending.

Claim Rejection - 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 22-23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

In order to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, claim 22 has been amended so that the phrase "*the control means*" has been changed to "*the first control means*."

The expression "*are controlled by the microprocessor*" has been made more clear by introducing what is controlled by the microprocessor, i.e. the pushbutton of the first control means. Claim 22 now recites that "*the pushbutton being controlled by the microprocessor*."

Claim 23 has been canceled.

As such, it is believed that the claims are now fully definite as required by 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Claim Rejection - 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-21 and 25-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by either Detsch et al., US patent No. 5,526,841 or 6,019,117.

Claims 1-27 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b) as being anticipated by Castellini EP 734,692 A2.

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New Claim 28

In order to overcome the rejections listed within the final Office Action, a new claim 28 has been presented. New claim 28 includes all the subject matter of original claim 1, along with the all the subject matter of original claim 6 as well as some additional features set forth in the Application's description (see e.g., *page 7, 17 -26*).

New claim 28 refers to an apparatus for supplying and sanitizing the water line of a dental unit. The water line comprises a main fluid supply line adapted to be connected at one end to at least one source of a first fluid and connected at the other end to the dental unit through at least one first branch for supplying a set of use-points comprising a plurality of handpieces. The water line also comprises respective first shutoff elements located on the first branch that supplies the handpieces and each designed to turn on the supply of a respective handpiece when required. The apparatus has at least one second branch connected to the first branch for conveying a second or a third fluid into the main line, the second branch and the main line being equipped with respective second and third shutoff elements designed to switch the supply of the first branch between the first fluid or the second or third fluid coming from the second branch. A first interchangeable tank is connected to the second branch for supplying this latter with one of the second or third fluid. The apparatus also comprises a first container for holding the handpieces or the ends of the conduits connecting with the dental unit during sterilization, disinfection, flushing or cleaning. The apparatus comprises first control means operatively connected to the first, second and third shutoff elements for coordinating the opening and closing of each of the shutoff elements according to the type of treatment to be achieved. Switching means are also connected to the first control means for controlling the opening and closing of the shutoff elements. The switching means being manually or automatically triggered to perform cycles of

treatment on the first branch with the first fluid and/or the second or third fluid conveyed by the second branch.

Taken as a whole, claim 1 defines an apparatus equipped with only two fluid lines (*a main fluid supply line and the second branch*), only one interchangeable tank and three fluids supplied (a first, a second and a third). The interchangeable tank allows the supply of the second or the third fluid to the main fluid supply line through the second branch.

Detsch et al., US patent No. 5,526,841 or 6,019,117, shows a water line decontamination system that is different with respect to the one defined in claimed 28. In particular, Detsch et al. discloses and shows an apparatus comprising a main fluid supply line (16, 58) a second branch (59) and a third branch (60), two tanks (22, 26) (one connected to the main fluid supply line (16, 58) and the other to the second branch (59)) and three fluids supplied: water (first tank (22)); disinfectant (26) (second tank (26)); and, air (line (14)). The Detsch et al. documents teach that each fluid is supplied using a respective supply line independent from the others. Furthermore, the Detsch et al. documents also teach dedicating one and only one fluid to each supply line, without allowing for changeability. In fact, the Detsch et al. documents do not provide for interchangeable tanks for supplying different fluids to the same line, but rather teach coupling each fluid with respective dedicated line.

Likewise, Castellini EP 734,692 A2 fails to provide the combination of features expressed within new claim 28. Indeed, Castellini also discloses a main fluid supply line 3 for supplying a first fluid, a second branch (21) for supplying a second fluid (20) and a third branch (46) for supplying a third fluid (46). Castellini also discloses two tanks (19, 22) not interchangeable, each corresponding to one specific fluid (*second and third fluid (20, 46)*). Therefore, also Castellini does not show an apparatus having two supply

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lines, three different fluids and only one interchangeable tank, but it only shows an apparatus provided with **three supply lines, three different fluids (one for each supply line) and two fixed tanks**. Thus, claim 28 is also submitted to define over Castellini.

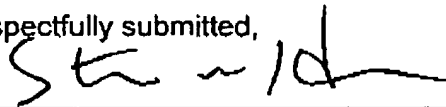
New claim 28 is not rendered obvious by the Detsch et al. and/or Castellini documents. In particular, both the Detsch et al. and Castellini documents teach a similar apparatus, i.e. an apparatus **having three supply lines, three fluids and two fixed tanks**. As such, none of the cited references provide any suggestion or hint to obtain the claimed solution as recited in claim 28 and described above. It is respectfully submitted that a person of ordinary skill in the art could never obtain the claimed solution by only consulting or combining the teachings of the Detsch et al. and Castellini documents, because they are similar to each other and different with respect the claimed solution as described above.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and withdrawal of the above rejections is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

All matters having been addressed above and in view of the pending claims and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests the entry of this amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration of the application, and the allowance of the pending claims. Applicant's counsel remains ready to assist the Examiner in any way to facilitate and expedite the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



Steven M. Haas (Reg. No. 37,841)
Fay, Sharpe, Fagan, Minnich & McKee, LLP
1100 Superior Avenue, Seventh Floor
Cleveland, Ohio 44114-2518
(216)861-5582